

**WILLIAMSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
2005 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WORK SESSION #20
Monday, November 29, 2004**

A work session of the Williamsburg Planning Commission was held on Monday, November 29, 2004, at 3:30 p.m., in Conference Room 3A, Williamsburg Municipal Building, 401 Lafayette Street.

ATTENDANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Present were Commissioners Young, Pons, Friend, McBeth and Rose. Absent were Commissioners Hertzler and Smith. Also present were Planning Director Nester and Zoning Administrator Murphy.

Mr. Young called the meeting to order.

OPEN FORUM

No one spoke in the open forum.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Presentation on Housing by Susan Gaston, representing the Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors

Susan Gaston, representing the Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors, gave a presentation on housing issues, covering the following points:

- Housing is a major component of planning, and drives other components of plan – where people live determines commercial development, transportation, recreation, schools, etc. It involves neighborhoods, density, development and affordable housing, and in Williamsburg it also involves student housing.
- Housing Affordability is a better term than “affordable housing” – it does not mean “low income” housing. Think of first-time homebuyers, young professionals, seniors on fixed incomes, etc. The General Assembly passed legislation requiring localities, as part of their comprehensive plan, to designate areas and implement measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality.
- The City should encourage a variety of housing types at a variety of price ranges for all economic segments of the community, create more affordable

- housing opportunities, redevelop and revitalize existing property, and provide incentives to property owners and landlords
- There are various types of housing incentives: favorable financing and/or land grants to encourage developers to invest in downtown Williamsburg; below-market second mortgages for rehabs; tax abatement on rehabilitation; down payment assistance grants; incentives for new homeowners to purchase rental properties for rehabilitation; and linking incentives for developers to certain design standards.
- Eliminating blight is an important goal. Rental housing frequently falls into this category – including student-occupied rental housing. With the incentives just discussed, and with current tools of the Building Code, much of this can be accomplished.
- Rental properties can be turned into owner-occupied, single family homes. Owners of rental properties may want to divest themselves of the properties, but they must be “incentivized” to do this.
- Think outside of the box for community design solutions. Use existing property; provide incentives for property owners to sell property and create vacant lots for development; encourage public-private partnerships; re-examine the Zoning Ordinance; create a well designed, high density, pedestrian-oriented, retail friendly, vibrant urban center downtown – “a core city village,” don’t think “Should we have density?”, think “What should the density look like?”
- Communities that allow only low density limit housing choices and drive up housing costs. You should balance low, medium and high density for a wider range of housing options and housing costs. Provide town homes, apartments, accessory units, live-work spaces and single family homes. This greater range of housing types expands housing choices within a neighborhood, and allows residents to choose housing that meets their changing needs and preferences over their lifetime. More housing choices at different price points increase affordability. Higher densities mean less land per unit, reduced site prep, and lower per unit infrastructure cost - all factors that reduce the costs of construction and expand reasonably prices housing.
- Higher density is part of smart growth, and is part of a new trend of community design: Neo-traditional or New Urbanism. Smart Growth is an integral part of the Realtors’ Public Policy Agenda. In general, smart growth describes the real estate development and public policy approaches meant to achieve more livable communities, use resources wisely and protect the environment. The five Smart Growth Principles are: Provide Housing Opportunity and Choice; Build Better Communities; Protect the Environment; Protect Private Property Rights; and Implement Fair and Reasonable Public Sector Fiscal Measures.
- Interconnected ideas of housing affordability, community design and smart growth should be incorporated into Comprehensive Plan Revisions. The zoning ordinance must be amended to allow for implementation of these ideas. This can create a vibrant urban village downtown, and will help

- resolve rental issue as well as blight issue, which creates a win-win for the community.
- The Williamsburg Area Association of Realtors stands ready to remain involved and assist, and will work with City leaders and staff to bring these ideas into play. We have resources at all levels of our association to assist in what we've discussed today, and recommend a focus group on these issues with Realtors to get even greater details.

Additional discussion followed the presentation.

Mr. Pons asked how does the City maintain affordable housing when housing costs are continually increasing? Ms. Gaston said that the higher the density, the more people can be housed at less cost/unit. Mr. Pons asked of the likelihood that the City can develop a more affordable product. Ms. Gaston said that the City needs to find a way to provide incentives to convert rentals to owner-occupied units. Properties can be assembled and cleared to create larger lots for redevelopment.

On question by Mr. Rose, Ms. Gaston noted successful programs in other communities, and referred Commissioners to the handout booklet that was distributed.

Mr. Nester reviewed the City's accomplishments in affordable housing, through the efforts of the Williamsburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Mr. Young said there may be other ways to pursue outside of the WRHA. Ms. Gaston said that they are willing to work on additional details on housing affordability. Mr. Young asked about some specific nearby examples. Ms. Gaston suggested Bobby Freeman as a possible resource. Mrs. McBeth asked for information on redevelopment on "small spots" instead of large tracts.

Review of the Public Forums on October 19 (Richmond Road Neighborhood Focus Area), November 4 (Jamestown Road Neighborhood Focus Area) and November 18 (Center City Focus Area)

Mr. Nester reviewed his memorandum on the last three Public Forums: October 19 (Richmond Road Neighborhood Focus Area), November 4 (Jamestown Road Neighborhood Focus Area), and November 18 (Center City Focus Area). He said that it is time start talking about the issues that have been raised in these meetings, and how they should be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Nester reviewed the three Focus Areas, making the following points:

Residential Land Use Designations

- There are only two residential areas in the Jamestown Road and Richmond Road areas that need discussion for possible changes. Casey Field, now designated Low Density Single Family Residential, could be considered for change to Medium Density Single Family Residential, which could allow a higher density single family development, or a rezoning to PDR allowing a

mix of dwelling unit types. The Griffin Avenue/Pollard Park/Chandler Court area, now designated Low Density Single Family Residential, could be left as is or considered for changing to Medium Density Single Family Residential, which more closely reflects the higher residential density of this area.

- For the Center City area, there are a number residential areas that could be considered for change. The WRHA Blayton Building could be considered for changing to Mixed Use or Downtown Commercial land use and increasing allowable density to 22 units/net acre to allow the option of construction of additional elderly housing in this close-in area. The North Henry Street (east side) and Scotland Street area, now designated Medium Density Single Family Attached Residential (6 to 8 units/net acre) could be considered for changing to a new Downtown Residential land use category, with 6-8 units/acre as the base density, with an ability to increase to 14 units/acre with a special use permit. South Henry Street (west side from Boundary to Mimosa), now designated Medium Density Single Family Attached Residential (6 to 8 units/net acre), could be considered for changing to the same new Downtown Residential land use category, with 6-8 units/acre as the base density, with an ability to increase to 14 units/acre with a special use permit. This new category could also be applied to South Boundary Street (north and south of Newport Avenue, includes Counselor's Close), which is now designated a combination of Low Density Single Family Residential, Office and Medium Density Single Family Attached Residential (6 to 8 units/net acre), and zoned a combination of RM-1, RM-2, PUD, and LB-3.
- The residential density in the City Square Area, now designated as Mixed Use, could be considered for increase from 8 units/net acre to 22 units/net acre, with a maximum of 8 to 10 units on an individual lot. This would allow a reasonable number of units on second and third floors, while discouraging large apartment complexes. A typical 0.2 acre lot would allow four dwelling units at 22 units/acre, while the existing 8 units per acre would allow only one dwelling unit. This density increase could also be applied to the Downtown Commercial land use area.

A discussion of the residential land use designation issues followed. Mr. Rose suggested increased enforcement of property maintenance standards if additional people were allowed to live in units. Mrs. McBeth suggested taxing residential rentals as businesses, and said that if the City allowed more flexibility, the flexibility would offer more opportunities. Mr. Pons said increased density could encourage people to tear down and rebuild. Mr. Friend said that he was concerned with the impacts of increased density on single family homes, sending a message that it is "morally reprehensible to own a single family home." He asked if the assumption to have more high density housing is right. Mr. Friend said that he can't accept that it is good for the City in the long run to cram in a lot of apartments and townhouses in single family areas. Mr. Pons said that he is still grappling with this issue. He said the City needs businesses, and businesses need people. He said that we are trying to make the City a better place, and noted that no residents of single family homes have asked for higher density housing. Mr. Friend noted that people who want higher

density housing have a profit motive. Mr. Rose asked what people want when they see this area as an urban center. Mr. Nester talked about higher density in the Center City area, and noted that there area only a few areas that may be suitable for higher density, and that if higher density is proposed, it needs to be done carefully with well-crafted zoning regulations. Mrs. McBeth said that she is in favor of higher density downtown as an option. Mr. Friend said that if higher density is proposed, it needs to be for very specific identified areas.

Room Rental to Visitors

Several options were presented to the Commission for consideration.

- Option 1 – Keep the present corridors, leave quota in place allowing no additional B&B uses, and leave room rental limitation at four bedrooms.
- Option 2 – Keep the present corridors, leave quota in place allowing no additional B&B uses, but allow additional rooms to be rented for each B&B, based on criteria to ensure compatibility with the neighborhoods.
- Option 3 – Keep the present corridors, eliminate quota, allow market to determine number of B&Bs. Keep four bedroom limit for bedrooms rented.
- Option 4 – Eliminate quota, allow market to determine number of B&Bs in the Richmond Road corridor. Allow additional rooms to be rented for each B&B, based on criteria to ensure compatibility with the neighborhoods.
- Option 5 – flexibility for larger lots. Allow larger lots to apply for a special use permit for additional rooms, but establish criteria to ensure compatibility with the neighborhoods as well as a limited number of larger establishments.

Discussion on these issues will continue at the next work session.

Number of non-related residents in a dwelling unit (3-person rule)

Mr. Nester said that a staff/student working group has been formed to continue discussion on this issue, and that more information will be presented to the Commission at a later date. A range of options was presented for future discussion:

- Option 1 – no change.
- Option 2 – change to the “4-person rule” that was in place prior to 1991.
- Option 3 – change to a “4-person rule” for multifamily dwelling districts, but keep the “3-person rule” for single family areas.
- Option 4 – change to allow more than three persons based on lot size, building size, number of bedrooms, and/or number of parking spaces. This is a major change in zoning regulations.

Richmond Road Commercial/Office area (Brooks St. to Williamsburg Shopping Center)

Mr. Nester outlined three options for this important corridor:

- Option 1 – continue the present zoning scheme through the land use designations, with Corridor Commercial land use on south side of Richmond Road from Brooks to Williamsburg Shopping Center, and Office land use on north side from Brooks to Westover.

- Option 2 – create a more limited mixed use area on the south side of Richmond Road from Brooks to Williamsburg Shopping Center, as recommended in the current plan. Leave Office land use on the north side from Brooks to Westover.
- Option 3 – create a unified Mixed Use land use area on both sides of Richmond Road from Brooks to the Williamsburg Shopping Center, more limited than the existing B-3 and more flexible than the existing LBR. This could be similar in intent to the existing LB-1 District in the City Square area. More intensive uses could require a special use permit.

Discussion on these issues will continue at the next work session.

Review format for the Commercial Corridor Public Forum on December 1

Commissioners discussed the format for the December 1 Public Forum on Commercial Corridors. It was decided to discuss the vision for each of the corridors separately, rather than at the beginning or end of the meeting, but to allow a short comment period at the end of the meeting to wrap things up.

OPEN FORUM

John Keane, The Williamsburg White House, 718 Jamestown Road, said that the B&B issues needed to be separated from the general residential issues. He also noted that it is important for the Commission to realize that it is doing its work for the citizens of Williamsburg.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Jesse Young, Chairman
Williamsburg Planning Commission